



An Interview with Dr. Alan Ross Hugenot

by Michael Tymn

When Alan Hugenot had a near-death experience in 1970, it didn't have a name and he was reluctant to talk about it. But he now says "the best thing that ever happened to me was when I 'died' in a motorcycle wreck."

It wasn't until 2006, as he approached retirement from his career as a naval architect and marine engineer, that he began seriously exploring consciousness, including mediumship. Now, 10 years later, Hugenot is an evidential medium, serving as a test medium for the Consciousness Research Laboratory at the Institute of Noetic Sciences, where he works with Drs. Dean Radin and Arnaud Delorme. He is also a board member for both our Academy and the International Association for Near-Death Studies. In addition, he is the author of *The Death Experience*, subtitled, "What it is like when you die."

After growing up in North Hollywood, Calif., Hugenot served in the U.S. Navy during the Vietnam War. He then studied mechanical engineering at Oregon Institute of Technology and began his career in the design department of Puget Sound Naval Shipyard in Washington. He eventually worked at "nearly every shipyard" in the country, on all three coasts and the Great Lakes. Along the way, he earned a Doctorate of Science in mechanical engineering.

Although "retired," Hugenot, who is married to Gale and lives in San Francisco, serves on a number of engineering standards writing committees and as chairman of the Motor Yacht and Service Craft Panel of the Small Craft Committee for the Society of Naval Architects and Marine Engineers. He is frequently asked to write and deliver papers on various aspects of naval engineering for other organizations. He also works occasionally as an expert witness in maritime cases.

I recently put some question to him by both email and phone.

Alan, please summarize your NDE.

"It was during May 1970 when I was attending college after serving in the Navy.

"Briefly, I was severely injured in a motor cycle accident, lapsed into a coma for 12 hours, traveled out-of-body where I communed on the other side with a *Being of Light*. After returning to the body, and regaining consciousness, I remained hospitalized for 33 days.

"This was five years before Dr. Raymond Moody published his book, *Life After Life*, in which he coined the term 'near-death experience.' Back in those dark ages, the standard medical procedure was to treat all NDEs as delusions. Consequently, the resident psychiatrist, after attempting to reason with me but finding he was unable to convince me of my error, decided that if I would not conform to his version of reality he would commit me to the insane asylum. This 'punishment' was for merely making such insane claims about, 'having died and then come back to life.'"

I gather you didn't keep the experience to yourself as so many people do.

"Yes, and one of the questions the psychiatrist put to me was, 'Just where do you think such a place as the afterlife could exist?' I didn't help my case any by responding, 'Doctor, I respect all your learning and degrees, but it is like I've been to Mexico and you haven't, and I want to tell you about my experience. But, instead of listening to me, and discovering a new country, you are telling me that based on your superior knowledge and training that you're sure that Mexico is impossible and so cannot exist, and that I must therefore be mistaken. Isn't that a little closed minded?'

"Luckily, my orthopedic surgeon, was not so backward in his medical technology, and so discharged me from the hospital a few days early, just ahead of the psychiatrist completing the papers to have me committed."

See INTERVIEW page 10



Hugenot



Reflecting Light

Rick Darby

What Would the Buddha Do?

Buddhism comes perhaps closer than any other major religion to a science of consciousness. Of course practicing Buddhists have their rituals and ceremonies, but they are marginal compared with mental and moral disciplines for reaching Nirvana, a state of spiritual Enlightenment.

If any religion can claim to be a religion of peace, it is Buddhism. No one has ever been forced to convert to Buddhism. Its adherents have never gone to war with others over religious beliefs. Buddhism has had doctrinal disagreements (it would be surprising, given human nature, had there been none in two-and-a-half millennia), principally the division into a northern or more popular school (Mahayana) and a southern and stricter school (Theravada). Add to that the exotic offshoots of Ch'an (China) and Zen (Japan), plus Tibetan Buddhism (bizarre to Westerners).

Yet none of these sects have fought with one another, except verbally and even there have agreed to disagree. No supreme leader issues pronouncements *ex cathedra* that all Buddhists are expected to follow.

In short, it is a gentle and tolerant religion that stresses personal transformation and compassion for all living beings. It is hard to imagine any kind-hearted person opposing Buddhism.

But what *is* Buddhist spirituality? It doesn't talk about a God or gods. Stranger still, to many, is the doctrine called *anattā*, meaning there is no soul or permanent identity behind individual lives on the material and nonmaterial planes. In Buddhist theory, no "you," temporary or eternal, exists. Consciousness is just an ever-shifting field of perceptions.

What could be inspiring about a notion that there is no Self to be saved or upgraded? It sounds like what Sophocles, in the *Ajax*, has his character Odysseus say: "For I see well, nought else are we but mere Phantoms, all we that live, mere fleeting shadows."

And then there is the problem of reincarnation, or as many Buddhist commentators prefer to call it, "rebirth" (a distinction without a difference). Most Buddhists believe in recurring lives — probably a holdover from the Hinduism that predated Buddhism in India, and which has continued its appeal to Buddhist adherents. But if there is no surviving soul, what can be reborn?

I think the question has provoked a good deal

of sophistry. There is no room in this column to discuss it more fully, but here is one example:

"Based on his no-soul (*anattā*) doctrine, the



Buddha described reincarnation, or the taking on of a new body in the next life, in a different way than the traditional Indian understanding. He compared it to lighting successive candles using the flame of the preceding candle. Although each flame is causally connected to the one that came before it, is it not the same flame."

Please. Whether it is the same or a different flame is a matter of philosophical spin. And saying, "Rebirth happens to you moment-to-moment, and also after death" is just playing with words.

So what can we make of the apparent contradictions of this religion which has lasted longer than any in the Western tradition, and deeply influences billions of people to this day?

First, in spite of the seeming continuity of the Buddha's teachings, it is possible some have been misinterpreted. Christmas Humphreys, among the most distinguished Western scholars of Buddhism, thought so:

"What, then, of those in the Theravada School who cry by day and night, 'no soul, no soul, no soul', yet in their dealings with their fellow-Buddhists behave at times as those who proclaim a doctrine which they do not believe to be true? It is surely a dreary, joyless and unprofitable doctrine, for if there is nothing to enter Nirvana how can this teaching conduce to peace of mind, to Nirvana, which is the test for all Buddhist teaching?"

Humphreys denied that the Buddha actually taught *anattā*.

I claim no expertise, but suspect that by the Buddha's own time, the already age-old Hindu religion had become so encrusted with superstition and esoteric metaphysical debates that its inner truth had been obscured. The Buddha wanted to cut through all that and focus on the cause and cure of suffering. His mission was to redirect human minds toward the true spiritual goal: not arguments about the nature or existence of Self, but direct *experience* of the Highest Reality.

President's Message: Join in the Journey

"To see a world in a grain of sand
And a Heaven in a wild flower
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand
And eternity in an hour"
— William Blake

On December 16, 2015, the board of directors held its annual meeting at which time Lee Lawrence and I were voted to three-year terms on the board of directors, ending in 2018.

A slate of officers was submitted by the executive committee for full three-year terms ending in 2018. I was elected as president, Nancy Zingrone as vice president and April Rooker as secretary. Other officers are Karin Nemri, treasurer, and Lee Lawrence, assistant treasurer — both terms ending in 2017.

This being the first quarterly issue of *The Searchlight*, for 2016, I want to take this opportunity on behalf of all the board members to extend to all of you who may be reading this, our very best wishes for a new year filled with the best of health, prosperity, happiness and gratitude for all that we have been given. As a reflection of that gratitude, I would request that all of us dedicate ourselves to the service of others in some small way, every minute of the day.

The Academy looks forward to an unprecedented year of continued growth and positive transformation to those who join with us on our journey to wholeness. A journey of remembering. A journey of no distance.



I request that you open yourself to, and immerse yourself in the mysteries that surround us, knowing that any darkness in our lives will be dissolved in the *Light* that we are.

I ask that you embrace the opportunity of discovery that will add true meaning and depth to your lives and to the lives of those who touch with your compassion and kindness.

In celebration of the holidays which have most recently passed, become a "bringer of good tidings of comfort and joy."

Make a difference.

The journey of discovery and of remembering that which we wish to become, we already are, is exhilarating and boundless: "hold infinity in the palm of your hand and eternity in an hour."

Join us.

— William E. Wilson

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It is easy to be too 'other-worldly' as to be too worldly. The truth is beneficial or harmful according to the character of the man who accepts it. There is probably not a single truth which human nature cannot pervert. A belief in a future life is no exception.

— James H. Hyslop, Ph.D., LL.D.

New Members

Joanne Kerr
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John Conzemius
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Sue Talbot
Dale Allen

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Tucson, AZ
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William Tregaskis, Donations
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Searchlight Media Watch



Tom and Lisa Butler, NST

Teleportation: In the People's Republic of China, a September 1981 paper was published in the journal *Ziran Zazhi* (*Nature Journal*) titled "Some Experiments on the Transfer of Objects Performed by Unusual Abilities of the Human Body" (Shuhuang et al., 1981). The paper reported that "gifted children" were able to cause the teleportation of small physical objects from one place to another. The objects included watches, horseflies, other insects, radio micro-transmitters, photosensitive paper and more. The participants never touched the objects beforehand and the experiments were done under both blind and double-blind conditions.



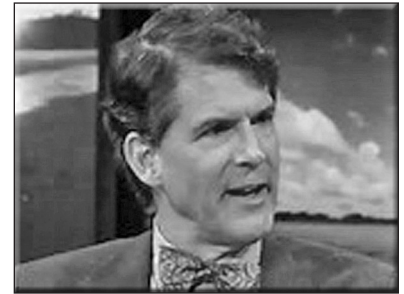
More research was done by the Aerospace Medicine Engineering Institute in Beijing, in July of 1990. It was published in the Chinese *Journal of Somatic Science* (Kongzhi et al., 1990; Jinggen et al., 1990; Banghui, 1990). This study reported several experiments involving high speed photography videotaping, which was able to capture the transfer of test specimens like nuts, matches, nails, pills and more through the walls of sealed paper envelopes, sealed glass bottles and tubes, sealed plastic film canisters and more without the walls of any of these containers being breached. All of these experiments reported using gifted children and adults to cause the teleportation of various materials. In all of the examples, it was reported that the test specimens remained in their original state after teleportation, including the insects.

Different research groups designed different experimental methods, used gifted psychics, different sealed containers and test specimens that were to be teleported. The experimental results were all repeatable. The conditions for fraud and sleight of hand were totally eliminated, and multiple outside witnesses (technical and military-intelligence experts) were present at all times.

From: "Scientists Report Teleportation of Physical Objects From One Location To Another" by Arjun Walia, Collective Evolution, collective-evolution.com.

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Touching Heaven is a television interview of Dr. Eben Alexander that will be broadcast throughout Latin America. Alexander is the neurosurgeon who fell into a coma while suffering from bacterial meningitis. He had a transcendental Near-Death Experience (NDE), which he says allowed him a glimpse of heaven, as well as proof of the existence of God and the afterlife. He insists his experience was not a hallucination, as his brain was comatose and incapable of any activity. He wrote about his NDE in the book, *Proof of Heaven*. His latest book is called



The Map of Heaven, which touches on meditation and the path to transcendence. "It's all about how the answers lie within us all," he says. "Before the Coma, I wanted to believe what I'd heard in church. But like so many who had grown up in the 60s and 70s, I knew full well that science is the pathway to truth. And I'll tell you, I am more of a scientist now than I've ever been in my life, and I realize that what is happening now is that science needs to greatly expand its boundaries to fully encompass the fundamental role of consciousness and acknowledge that the soul exists."

From: "Touching Heaven," MST Lifestyle, The Standard, manilastandardtoday.com/mobile/2015/04/04/touching-heaven/

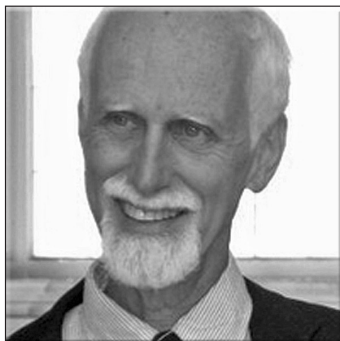
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Belief in the Afterlife: Nearly three-quarters of the people surveyed in a new study said they believed in a life after death. This number has remained the same since a survey taken in 1976. Another study of 1,000 Presbyterians looked at the relationship between religious beliefs and fears about death and dying. The survey found that "More frequent church attendance, involvement in church activities outside of worship and belief in life after death were all associated with less fear of the unknown beyond this life." Parents of children with life-threatening conditions said that "Religion and spirituality were important sources of support and comfort." Of course, individual believers respond differently to death anxiety. "Some faithful parents found it helpful to express their anger toward God, but some parents moved away from their faith."

From: "Secularism is spreading, but belief in afterlife lives on" by Peggy Fletcher Stack, The Salt Lake Tribune, sltrib.com/blog/

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Afterlife Cafes: Stafford Betty is a professor of religious studies at California State University in Bakersfield whose interests include the near-death experience, deathbed visions, spirit communication, reincarnation memories, and terminal lucidity among Alzheimer's victims. He says that there is a library of information and research that points to a world that doesn't require us to have a physical body to be alive. He says that



"One of the most intriguing social movements in recent years is the Death Café. People come together to talk about death. Taking it out of the closet, they say, helps remove the fear of it." Betty says that perhaps it removes the fear for some, "But for me, and most of my audiences, talking about death no more removes the fear of it than talking about a large asteroid heading our way. We need Afterlife Cafes, not Death Cafes."

From: "The Misguided Quest for Physical Immortality" by Stafford Betty, Huff Post Wired News, huffingtonpost.com

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Afterlife Accounts Removed: The publishing arm of the Southern Baptist Convention has stopped selling popular accounts of the afterlife like *Heaven is for Real* and *90 Minutes in Heaven* at its national chain of Lifeway Christian Bookstores. At their annual convention, they warned that such books and films can lead people astray with "Personal testimonies that cannot be corroborated," and that these accounts sometimes conflict with scripture. They overwhelmingly passed a resolution declaring "The sufficiency of biblical revelation over subjective experiential" accounts of heaven and hell. Lifeway stopped ordering personal afterlife accounts last summer and the remaining heaven visitation items have been removed from their stores and website and will not be replenished.

From: Personal afterlife accounts removed from Baptist bookstores, The Associated Press, March 25, 2015

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Our Unconscious Mind: An earlier issue of Media Watch included a report about James Carpenter's First Sight Theory. In it, he described parapsychological research indicating that we unconsciously

sense our physical and psychic environment before we are consciously aware of the information. Everything produces a psi signal which we sense, but we only consciously experience what our unconscious mind thinks of the information.

Because this theory is based on psi functioning research, it seemed likely that mainstream science



would reject the concept. However, articles about unconscious mental processing are beginning to show up in the mainstreams media ... Without reference to psi, of course.

From the Introduction of *Our Unconscious Mind*: "When psychologists try to understand the way our mind works, they frequently come to a conclusion that may seem startling: people often make decisions without having given them much thought—or, more precisely, before they have thought about them consciously. When we decide how to vote, what to buy, where to go on vacation and myriad other things, unconscious thoughts that we are not even aware of typically play a big role. Research has recently brought to light just how profoundly our unconscious mind shapes our day-to-day interactions."

From: "Our Unconscious Mind," by Bargh, John A., *Scientific American*, January 2015, pages 30-37. And, Carpenter, James C. First Sight: ESP and Parapsychology in Everyday Life, firstsightbook.com.

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Resource for Widows and Widowers: Soaring Spirits (soaringspirits.org) creates and maintains innovative peer-based grief support programs for widowed men and women. Based on the powerful connections created by shared experience, they endeavor to ensure that no one need grieve alone. The group offers understanding, friendship, inspiration and encouragement.

Widowed people created Soaring Spirits because they discovered that connecting with other widowed people made the challenges of surviving a spouse or partner a little easier to manage. Soaring Spirits communities, online and in person are diverse, inclusive, secular, and positive. They share resources, ideas, energy and hope. They offer programs that connect widowed people around the world providing both online and in-person opportunities for finding peer support. You can access the programs from the comfort of your own home, or you can meet up with other widowed people in person ... whatever works best for you.

Strange Seas of Thought

by Rick Darby

The virtuoso pianist Artur Schnabel said that Beethoven's late piano sonatas were greater than they could be played.

On the face of it such a statement is puzzling, even illogical — what is played *is* the music. Or is it? Many admirers of Beethoven's art have listened to his creations and felt, at times, that they touched on something beyond sound or arrangements of notes. They suggested experience outside ordinary consciousness, even spiritual states.

Skeptics could argue that the idea of any music being, in itself, spiritual is false. Take it out of its performing context (such as worship service), change any lyrics it contains into Martian language, and it is just music, however beautiful or pleasing. If you have no German, a J.S. Bach "sacred" cantata is said to be indistinguishable from a "secular" one like the "Coffee Cantata."

J.W.N. Sullivan disagrees, at least in the case of Ludwig van Beethoven. In his 1927 book *Beethoven: His Spiritual Development*, Sullivan argues that music "can express states of consciousness that language is not fitted to deal with. And Beethoven, to an extent unusual even amongst musicians, was concerned with such states."

The writer is not referring only to deeply felt emotions, which can sometimes be almost impossible to put into words except indirectly through poetry. Sullivan is clear that Beethoven can transform our perceptions not just through beauty; some of the composer's greatest works are not even conventionally beautiful. What grand states of consciousness did Beethoven express, or aim to express?

"Amongst musical phrases are some which do more than please our musical faculty," Sullivan believes. "They stir other elements in us; they reverberate throughout a larger part of our being. ...

"That [Beethoven's music] is greater than any other music has been, on the whole, depends on what we have called its spiritual content, and this is something that the listener perceives directly, although he may be entirely unable to formulate it. Beethoven's work will live because of the permanent value, to the human race, of the experiences it communicates. These experiences are valuable because they are in the line of human development; they are experiences to which the race, in its evolutionary march, aspires." He means the evolution toward greater awareness of transcendent reality.

"The older Beethoven lived, the more and more profound was what he had to say," Sullivan asserts.



Like most writers on the subject, he divides the composer's output into three reasonably distinct periods.

The first period, as a popular young composer and pianist in the Vienna of the late 18th and very early 19th century, is not especially relevant to the thesis. The second period was a response to the crushing blow of Beethoven's loss of hearing, which must have seemed like the ultimate curse to someone who lived for music.

Eventually, after a period of desolation, Beethoven gathered his strength. As Sullivan puts it, "A rigid, strained defiance was no longer necessary. What he came to see as his most urgent task, for his future spiritual development, was *submission*. He had to learn to accept his suffering as in some mysterious way necessary." Famous compositions such as the Third and Fifth Symphonies, expressing an unmistakable "heroic" quality, spelled out an act of will and determination to overcome the handicap.

That battle may have been won, but it was not the last of Beethoven's trials.

He was empathetic toward mankind but, except perhaps for his early Vienna years, largely isolated from personal interaction because of social awkwardness, an uneven temper, and of course deafness. His relatives were distant, his few marriage proposals met rejection. Sullivan says this resulted in "his growing consciousness that what is called the 'human' life, the life that includes love, marriage, children, friends was withheld from him."

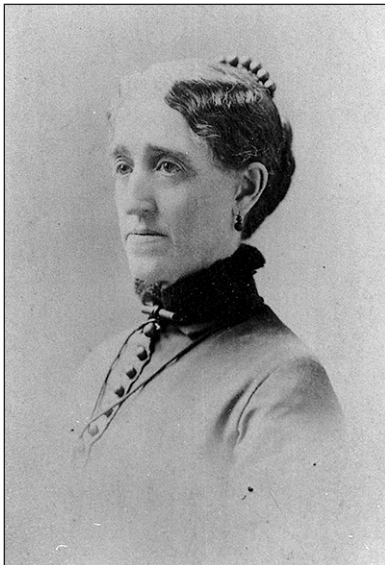
After several mostly unproductive years, Beethoven seems to have assimilated even this misfortune. He emerged into the third period, which included the Ninth Symphony. "The Adagio of the ninth symphony remains purely human and personal and Beethoven was, at this time, reaching out after something that should transcend what is called the human," Sullivan says. The last period includes other landmarks such as the "Hammerklavier" piano sonata ... and the late string quartets.

The quartets are unlike anything written before or since, so unusual in places that even modern audiences — used to dissonant music — often don't know what to make of them. Sometimes rough and bizarre on the surface, they nevertheless repay close attention and familiarity.

"When we come to the last quartets we find a still more remote spiritual content," Sullivan says. "We here become aware not only of new syntheses of spiritual elements, but of radically new elements. In these 'strange seas of thought' [a phrase from Wordsworth] Beethoven has discovered unsuspected islands and even continents." He had gone beyond the world and himself. Such artistry will inspire hearers till time folds and the seas grow tired.

What the Spirits Told a Prominent Lawyer

Sometime in 1892, Edward C. Randall, a prominent Buffalo, New York trial lawyer and businessman, was asked by a friend to accompany him on a visit to Emily S. French, a Rochester woman who, Randall was told, had strange powers and received messages from spirits. "This was an unexplored world to me," Randall wrote. "I went, and found there two others, both men of national reputation. We sat in a dark room for two hours, and heard what purported to be voices, though they were only faint whispers. We were not at all satisfied, but could not condemn, because we did not understand.



Emily French

...We did not then believe that the whispers came from the great beyond, but, mystified, we determined to know what they were."

Over the next 20 years, until Mrs. French's death in 1912, at age 80, Randall would sit with her more than 700 times. "In my investigations, covering many years, in the room in my own home devoted to such work, thousands of men whom I have known personally have talked with me, using their own tongues," he wrote. "I have recognized their voices; they have recalled and related countless facts and incidents of their daily life and have proved beyond question their identity."

Randall noted that each voice had individuality. "When new spirits come for the first time and take on the condition of vocalization, there is often a similarity in tone quality, but this soon passes away, as they grow accustomed to using their voices in this way," he explained. "The voices of those accustomed to speak never change, and are easily recognized. There is no similarity of thought or words." Randall further mentioned that the strength of the voices varies greatly, much as they do in earth life.

After satisfying himself that Mrs. French was a genuine medium and that he was hearing from "spirit people," including his mother and father, Randall turned to asking the spirit people questions about the afterlife. In one communication, the communicating spirit likened the difference between his plane and the earth plane as much like the difference between living on land and living in the sea,

pointing out that people on land could move with greater freedom than life that exists in the oceans because the material conditions become higher in vibration as we ascend the scales of motion, or, to look at it from the other end, there is more resistance the lower we descend. But Randall asked for further clarification and was told: "It is difficult to explain to you who know little of matter, the locations and boundaries of the various planes where we live. First let me impress upon you the fact that energy, that is, life, cannot express itself except in substance. The idea that spirit people function without substance and that they and the plane in which they live are unsubstantial, is preposterous and illogical. The gases that compose water, taken separately, are as substantial as when united. Why should it be thought impossible, since matter was created, for Nature to create other material than physical, to create spirit material? There are millions of worlds inhabited by human beings in that space you call the sky. Don't for a moment think that yours is the only world, and that God made the universe for you alone."

The spirit went on to say that around and about the globe we call earth are separate, material, concentric belts, zones, or planes, varying in width and vibratory action, as well as in density, and it is to these zones or planes that planetary life passes at the event we call death. He added that he knew only the boundaries of the plane in which he existed and did not know any more about the boundaries of the planes beyond him than Randall knew about the spirit planes. Numerous other spirits referred to the planes or spheres in the afterlife and said that there were seven of them.

Another spirit communicated that she was on the third sphere and only knew of higher spheres from what teachers from those spheres have told her. "In the lower sphere, one sees such suffering among those still earth-bound," she communicated. "They, too, are busy working out past faults and they are often heavy-hearted." As the spirit ascends in the spheres, she reported, the harmony increases while the error and falsehood decrease.

"Those who are advanced in the afterlife are ever ready and anxious to help any below them, and they do a wonderful work," Randall set forth his understanding. "But there are many whom they cannot reach, and it is only by blending their forces with ours that a condition was created where these poor souls could be brought to a realization of their condition and started toward a higher development."

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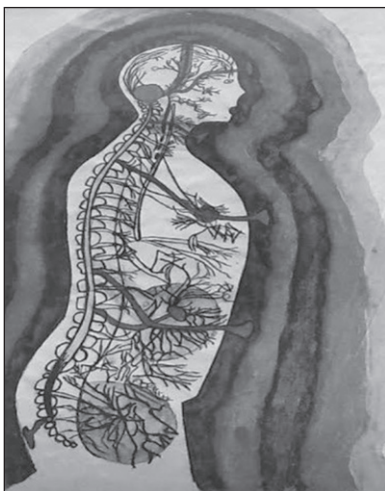
Ref: *Frontiers of the After-Life* by Edward C. Randall and *The French Revelation* by N. Riley Heagerty

The Silver Cord and Vagal Nerve Connection

by Karen E. Herrick, Ph.D.

Something esoteric is characterized by being secret, private or confidential and refers to ideas, doctrines or literature that is understood by only a select group and is not intended for the general population. According to Allan Kardec, a distinguished 19th century French educator and psychical researcher, and other credible esoteric teachers, there are magnetic currents, called the *silver cord*, that hold the ethereal body close to the physical body while here on earth.

The silver cord, or thread, is similar to the umbilical cord, which connects the fetus at the navel with the placenta in a pregnant woman. If we can accept the teachings of metaphysician Anthony Fisichella (*Metaphysics: The Science of Life*, 1984), the soul projects itself down into the human body using this thread, and anchors itself through a spiritual process equivalent to atomic fusion.



According to Professor Stephen Porges, author of *The Polyvagal Theory* (2011), the vagus nerve is a bundle of different-sized nerves. It is the 10th and longest cranial nerve, divided into three main strands, and enters the brain at the medulla, runs along the spinal column, extends into the chest cavity to the heart and ends in the abdomen attaching to the intestines. (See illustration above). Eighty percent of the nerve is devoted to relaying information from the body to the brain. This has not been a secret to much of the medical community.

In *The Donning International Encyclopedic Psychic Dictionary* (1986), we are told that one can breathe by not using the nostrils but by employing the vagus nerve within the body. In deep meditation, the normal breathing mechanism becomes temporarily suspended and an inner-breathing mechanism assumes control. The vagus nerve then makes a passage for the internal soul-mind breath, used by yogis and Tibetans who can stay concealed in a cell or box for days. Egyptian initiations were also done in this way. Initiated Egyptians were then called the "twice-born ones."

At the time of death, the cumulative research

suggests, our etheric body soars upward, freed from its mortal body and starts communicating with spirits and guides from the other side. It then has the revelation that the soul, the "real self," is indeed immortal. In one story by P. Longley, as told in a 1909 book, *Man's Survival after Death*, by Charles Tweedale, it is stated: "His head is bending over touching an open book and he sees a slender cord that has been holding him to this other form. It is vibrating rapidly towards him, swinging loose from the prostrate body. He sees the cord vibrating rapidly toward him and watches as the cord swings loose from the prostrate body and becomes absorbed within him. The other body at the table is not him. He is aware of that. He turns from it without question. He feels so light and airy. And so free. How grand it is to breathe. He has not felt so well for years. He feels now he has so much time."

I found the below illustrations accompanying this article at the Lily Dale (NY) museum with the help of curator Ron Nagy. The first shows a woman in the dying process, as she reaches toward the spirits on the other side. The vagus nerve in this illustration separates from her body as her vibratory rate slows and the vagus cord becomes absorbed by her etheric body.



The vagal nerve is now cut in both places and, as it dangles in the air, it returns up into the etheric body. It does this with each lifetime and I believe this is where our memory is stored.

In another story I found at the Lily Dale library, one bereaved husband stated: "It is as a kind of push and pull and twist combined with a clear and gentle sense of electricity emanating from what seemed to me from an unseen hand. This was repeated over and over again until the strength finally seemed to fail." He further reported feeling "her magnetic pressure." (See illustration on page 9).

Robert Monroe in his book, *Journeys Out of the Body* (1971), describes the vagal nerve/silver cord in his body: "As I reached the back of my head, my hand brushed against something and I felt behind

with both hands. Whatever it was extended out from a spot in my back directly between my shoulder blades as nearly as I can determine, not from the head, as I expected. I felt the base and it felt exactly like the spread-out roots of a tree radiating out from the basic trunk. The roots slanted outward and into my back down as far as the middle of my



torso, up to my neck and into the shoulders on each side. I reached outward and it formed into a 'cord,' if you can call a two-inch-thick cable a 'cord.' It was hanging loosely and I could feel its texture very definitely. It was body warm to the touch and

seemed to be packed neatly together but not twisted or spiraled. It was flexible and seemed to have no skin covering."

I recently received information from a group of spiritual guides through "Judy," the client I spoke about during my workshop, *The Making of a Medium*, at our 2014 Scottsdale Conference. Judy's psychic abilities were beginning to show themselves when she came to me. She has grounded and increased these abilities and now only allows positive spirits to come to her.

I asked the questions because as Judy said, "Karen, they can hear you." The guides then "spoke" to Judy and Judy relayed the information from them, interpreting the symbols and information that they gave her. The guides mentioned that the silver cord/vagus nerve connection is how we have mediumship of all types. We receive magnetic pressure in the form of chills and tinglings! And, this pressure is responsible for such phenomena as out-of-body experiences, automatic writing, contacting dimensional planes, dreams, information received during meditation, visits to mediums, psychic knowledge, and many other spiritual and paranormal experiences.

When I asked the guides if Mesmer's animal magnetism had something to do with this electrical process, they responded, "Yes, that is part of it." The guides stated that Mesmer's magnetism doesn't work the same on all bodies, which is what Mesmer has been quoted as saying, because some people have a type of energy different from that of others. The guides continued: "Electricity runs differently or it just runs faster and . . . mediums or psychic people have bigger holes than other people."

"Bigger holes," I responded. "Would those holes be called chakras?" "Yes, they answered." They continued, "Like a spider, each person cre-

ates their own silken thread/s. It is how the person grasps deeper and deeper realizations of connectedness to the whole. This is called the development of consciousness. The cord gets brighter and stronger. Some will grow faster than others. Some will grow smaller. It's not a judgment. The purpose of a life period is for us to advance spiritually."

Comments and other views regarding the silver cord and vagus nerve would be appreciated. Send to Karen Herrick at karen@karenherrick.com

Prayer Of The Universe

"Would you like to swing on a star?
Carry moonbeams home in a jar?"

- Bing Crosby

When I leave this world behind,
in that travel time tunnel,
before your miracle of Mystery,
Grant my prayer to explore
timeless infinity,
where I will not be lost
but instead may know-
Your height and width and breadth.

Let me draw close
to 200 billion years
through and through the star light,
longer, still longer from Earth,
Remove me from what I know,
but keep me close to what I feel,
until the dark and light of my story
ushers in a calm respite
like a curl into deep sleep.

Before you bear me to your Love,
guide me to your cosmos-
dwarf stars, gas clouds, new space,
Let me watch starlight start
and become one with the Milky Way.

Let my consciousness reunite
with loved ones who dwell here.

If even for a wink of time,
let me view limitless peace.

And please pour wisdom
through the firmament to all
who stay with life on Earth.

-Joy DeHarpporte

INTERVIEW

From page 1

Why did it take you some 40 years to start talking about your NDE and writing about it and related topics?

"Early on, after the NDE, burdened with visceral personal knowledge of an inconvenient truth, and being unable to reconcile it with society's standard model of reality, I quickly learned to be quiet about what I knew. Instead, and unlike the other SET (Science, Engineering & Technology) students, I began to also study philosophy, history, logic, meta-physics in evening classes, beginning a research odyssey which has now spanned 46 years, investigating multiple scientific disciplines, collating data and verifying the science supporting what I knew.

"When an event or experience occurs, which has no explanation within the current scientific framework, it is considered an *anomaly*. By being killed and coming back I had myself become a scientific *anomaly*. But, it is such anomalies which stubbornly refuse to go away that eventually act as the catalyst for a new advance in science. Today, I am welcomed as a featured speaker."

What were your early religious or spiritual views?

"I was raised in a fundamentalist Baptist home. My own views were discounted by my parents, and so when I left for the Navy I investigated all the various religions with Navy chaplains. I later became a Lutheran (Missouri Synod) because they seemed to actually study their Bible rather than carry it around like an anchor without opening it. But, prior to the NDE, if you had asked me what I thought happened after death I would have said, 'My church believes there is a heaven and a hell, but I'm not so sure what happens.'

"Today, my sister thinks that because I am an evidential medium I have gone the way of the devil. And so she refuses to talk to me. But, while receiving readings from mediums who do not know me, my mother has come through from the other side with excellent evidential information, to tell me that she is sorry for both her fundamentalism, and also for leading my sister astray."

So how have your views changed?

"The primary lesson I learned while out-of-body was that we are not physical beings, but are instead eternal spirits temporarily occupying

physical bodies.

"The NDE moved me toward eastern meditative traditions, the Unity School or Practical Christianity and finally, as I became a medium, into Spiritualism. But I do not believe in a hell or retribution, and I do believe in universal salvation (everyone has eternal life).

"I came to realize that the Newtonian box I had been trained to use in my work as an engineer is only a fragment of the story of the conscious universe. In a larger sense, I also learned that our 350-year-old paradigm of classical Newtonian physics, limited to three dimensions plus time, did not include everything. In fact, it fell far short and only included a very small corner of a much larger universe. I realized materialist science was deeply flawed in its world view.

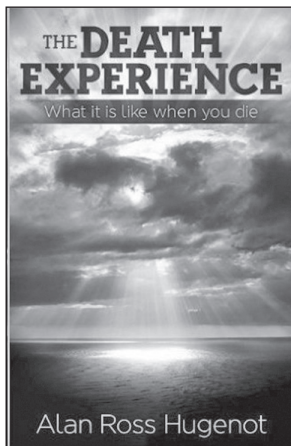
"I believe that the only scientific way to understand mediumship is to do it yourself, so I took a correspondence course in mediumship from the Morris Pratt Institute, and then later attended the course in evidential mediumship at Arthur Findlay College in England. I now know unequivocally that we continue after death in alternative dimensions of existence, but I want to better understand the precise physics and biology behind it all."

To what extent have you developed your mediumship?

"All I can do is point to the evidence. Once, while working on the platform before a Spiritualist church, I brought through five spirits in a row, related to three sitters. I gave their accurate names and relationships without guessing. When you look at the statistics just on the names, the odds are 320 billion to one of getting all of them. But, if you take into account the fact that I also gave their correct relationships to the sitters, with odds of say one in 12, (mother, father, sister, brother, uncle, aunt, cousin, grandma, grandpa, great grandma, great grandpa, friend), the odds become astronomical, roughly 79.6 quadrillion to one. So, I have to ask... how did I get that information? How can it not be spirit talking to me?"

Some parapsychologists would say you received it telepathically from the sitter or, if it is information the sitter didn't have, that you accessed it from a relative or friend of the sitter on the other side of the country.

"I can't prove that is not the case and there is no science to prove it one way or the other, but it makes much more sense to me that it is spirit talking to me rather than getting it through telepathy or remote viewing of some kind. I think Occam's Razor favors spirit communication over telepathy or remote viewing, especially when you are talking about tapping into the consciousness of someone



not even present. How did I find that person and how did I extract that bit of information from his consciousness?"

Your background is in a scientific discipline and you certainly believe in the scientific method. When a scientist says that survival of consciousness at death is impossible, how do you answer him or her?

"I tell them to stop hiding from the data. I point out that materialism which assumes that the paranormal is impossible has itself been proven false by quantum electro-dynamics (QED), fully 90 years ago. I point out that all the 'first principles' of materialism are proven false by QED and non-locality. And, that although the religious dogma of materialism is that the paranormal is 'impossible,' there has never been any proof whatsoever, so it is just a materialist superstition. I state that any true scientist would look at the data, and anything less is stupid and not science."

What if the skeptical scientist asks you how consciousness can go on without a functioning brain?

"Same answer. I state that this can only be true for someone who believes the brain creates consciousness. How could a cold dead universe develop life? And how could that life develop consciousness? Isn't that a miracle that even Jesus could not produce?"

"Therefore, the universe must have already been conscious. And, everything even those 'dead' stones are made of consciousness. This is what materialism can't quite believe, but it is no problem for QED and biocentrism."

I understand that you have authored a new book which will be published early this year. How will it differ from your first book?

"Everyone wants me to talk about the science of the afterlife, which was scrunched into just one chapter of my 2012 book, *The Death Experience*, so my upcoming 2016 book, *The New Science of Consciousness Survival*, which has a Foreword by Dr. Gary Schwartz, discusses how the sciences of quantum electro-dynamics, near-death experiences, biocentrism and the sciences of consciousness survival have already replaced Newtonian materialism, at least for those scientists with the intellectual honesty and scientific rigor to examine the extensive and overwhelming data and to pay attention to what it means.

"When we can't discern 96 percent of what exists in our universe, there is plenty of spare room for all kinds of unknowns – much more than just the afterlife's 'undiscovered country from whose bourn no traveler returns,' but entire undiscovered

galaxies, alternative dimensions, multi-verses, etc., etc.

"Hopefully, this book will make all this easily understandable in a simple way, showing how materialism has always been merely speculation based on several untrue presuppositions, and also how the evolving scientific world view based on quantum electro-dynamics allows the existence of psi, the para-normal and consciousness survival, to all be valid."

Do you sometimes feel like you are preaching to the choir, that no real progress is being made in getting your message across?

"No, actually I see great progress. Forty-six years ago they wanted to put me in the nut house, but now I am the featured speaker at numerous organizations. Materialism is on its last legs and the meta-paradigm is shifting."

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
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ASCS 2016 Conferences

June 8-12
Chapel Hill, NC

Nov. 30 – Dec. 4
Scottsdale, AZ



Vistas of Infinity: How to Enjoy Life When You Are Dead, by Jurgen Ziewe, lulu.com, 2015, 270 pages.

The cumulative testimony for the reality of the out-of-body experience is convincing for the open-minded person. There is too much consistency among the reports, too many honorable people among the reporters, too much intricate detail in the reporting of the explorations, and too little profit to be made from writing such books to believe that they are nothing but flights of the imagination.

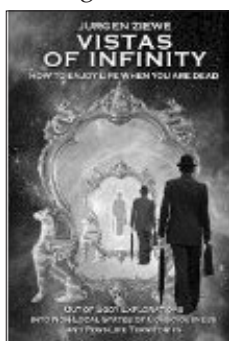
"They were experienced in full waking awareness with my self-identity intact and the full awareness that my physical body was where it was at the time of the experience," author Jurgen Ziewe, a resident of England, explains, adding that he has spent hundreds of hours over the past 40 years in his OBE explorations.

Ziewe's explorations take him to realms of existence that go beyond human language and understanding, but he does his best to describe them. "For many of the environments I have visited, I could only really give testimony of them by reproducing them as images," he states. "In our verbal descriptions we quickly run out of words and adjectives, such as beautiful, awe-inspiring, magnificent, etc. Here language, even in the hands of the poet, will never be able to paint the subtle hues and atmospheres, the way the grass yields underfoot, the way colours percolate into different shapes to form new structures, the way new emotions are brought into awareness by the sight of strange landscapes or mind-bending features never before seen."

Consistent with all other OBE reporters as well as the many mediumship reports, Ziewe finds that the afterlife is not limited to the humdrum heaven and horrific hell of orthodox religion. Rather there are many realms or layers, as he calls them. "Afterlife states are as numerous as human beings, and as complex," he offers, going on to explain that in the lower realms, which on one exploration he found dark, murky, and seemingly polluted, there is much depravity and despair, though the residents are not confined there.

Ziewe concludes that a person's mindset determines his environment when he/she dies. "Unlike physical life, our surroundings will be furnished with the content of our subconscious," he writes, going on to say that "We will find all our actions manifested in our non-physical environment once the protective capsule of our physical body has been exited for good."

— Michael Tymn



Liberating Jesus, by Roberta Grimes, Christine F. Anderson Publishing & Media Madison, VA, 2015, 207 pages

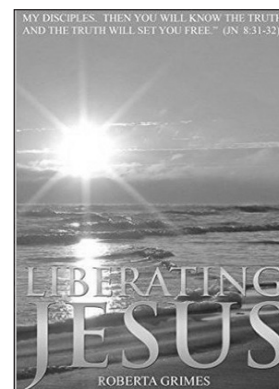
Roberta Grimes, whose previous books include *The Fun of Dying* and *The Fun of Staying in Touch*, examines the Bible, dissecting many of its passages, while showing how various verbiage can be interpreted in different ways and how orthodoxy, in its various translations, seems to have interpreted so much of it in a way that lends itself to fear-based governing. Her focus is on the gospels of the New Testament. "Christians have diluted the message of Jesus by considering the Old Testament and the balance of the New Testament to be on a par with the divinely-inspired Gospels," Grimes explains. "The lack of focus on God's truth as it is revealed to us in the Gospels has stunted Christianity in peculiar ways. Basically, she dismisses 1) a human-like God; 2) a devil figure; 3) eternal damnation in a fiery hell; 4) the atonement doctrine; and 5) that being a Christian matters when it comes to one's initial station in the afterlife.

"The whole medieval notion of a King on a glorious throne who is apparently meant to be Jesus, and having all the nations bowing before Him and separating the sheep from the goats, and the whole concept of God loving some a lot and others not so much: all of that is so inconsistent with the rest of the Gospels, the afterlife evidence, and even the culture in which Jesus lived that it has to have been added later," Grimes states.

Having done a thorough investigation of more modern revelation, such as credible mediumship, near-death experiences, out-of-body experiences, deathbed visions, and other paranormal phenomena, Grimes, who grew up as a devout Protestant and then Catholic, is able to reconcile the modern revelation with the teachings of the gospels, finding a Truth that offers a divine plan consistent with a loving creator, not the cruel, capricious, vindictive god of the Old Testament, nor a dichotomous afterlife — one area reserved for the righteous and another area for the wicked.

Drawing from more modern and more sensible revelation, Grimes concludes that we judge ourselves and we gravitate to a vibrational level in the afterlife environment that best suits our spiritual development. There is no cheating and going to a level higher than that for which we are prepared.

— Michael Tymn



Understanding Life After Death: An Exploration of What Awaits You, Me and Everyone We've Ever Known, by Cyrus Kirkpatrick, Developed Life Books, Tucson, AZ, 2015, 304 pages

This book offers a wide range of subjects under the “afterlife” heading – evidence for the survival of consciousness, personal experiences suggesting survival, philosophy, science, psychology, skepticism, mythology, history, what-have-you. After discussing some of the best evidence, author Kirkpatrick provides some very interesting out-of-body experiences (OBEs) of his own.

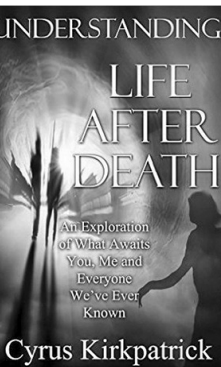
Not yet 30 years of age, Kirkpatrick is aware that his experiences and research will be met by the disdain of those fancying themselves as wise, intelligent and rational people. “Some of my generation’s disdain for the supernatural is born from rightful distrust of religion and its vague links to even the secular cases for the ‘soul,’” he explains. He spends quite a bit of time setting forth the debunkers’ views, explaining how they arrived at their smug positions, before he then debunks the debunkers.

I found Kirkpatrick’s “forays into the astral,” especially interesting. He states that he first began exploring the OBE state in 2013. “I was shocked by how my consciousness was the same as waking – immediately clarifying that I was not asleep,” he writes, going on to describe how in his OBE state he was still tethered to his body and that concentration was required to keep from falling into a dream state. After some practice, he took it to another level and realized that he was astral projecting and in another realm of existence. After conversing with others in that other reality, he came to the conclusion that humans are supposed to remain confused about their true nature, as it is part of the developmental process.

There is much discussion of the mediumship of Leslie Flint. While pointing out that the *Wikipedia* write-up on Flint has the usual debunking bias, claiming that Flint was an elaborate magician, Kirkpatrick counters all the debunking arguments with explanations as to how and why the debunkers are wrong.

“Afterlife awareness, at least in my personal experience, amplifies my life,” Kirkpatrick ends his discussion. “What I discovered was that the ordinary lingering fear of death was at least partially lifted from my shoulders.”

Basically, the book is aimed at helping the reader in “living life to the max” – something much easier to do when we are less fearful and see meaning that goes beyond this life. The open-minded reader should find much food for thought in this book and be nourished by it.



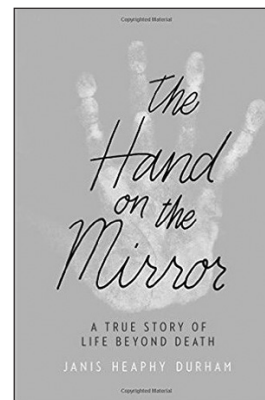
– Michael E. Tymn

The Hand on the Mirror, by Janis Heaphy Durham, Grand Central Publishing, New York, NY, 2015, 268 pages

After reading the on-line synopsis of this book, which first referred to phenomena such as lights flickering and doors opening and closing on their own, I was inclined to write this book off as one not offering much more than minor phenomena best explained by natural causes or coincidence. I experience flickering lights and doors shutting on their own all the time, seemingly the result of power surges, wind gusts, whatever. The synopsis did go on to mention a mysterious powdery hand print on a mirror, but that, in itself, was not enough to make me want to purchase and read the book. I was curious, but I didn’t need convincing of the reality of spirit phenomena. After more than 25 years of studying such phenomena and writing five books and countless newspaper, magazine, and journal articles about them, I doubted that one more phenomenon would add much to what I had already come to understand and believe about the survival of consciousness after death and the various spirit phenomena related to it.

But some six months after that first look at the synopsis, I decided to give it a try, if for no other reason than to write a review for this publication. I opened the book without much enthusiasm, but it didn’t take too many pages before I was eagerly into it. After finishing the first chapter, I looked at the pictures in the middle of the book, including that of the powdery hand imprint, and found it difficult to close the book. While the various phenomena experienced by the author, a retired journalist and publisher, could probably have been condensed in a two-thousand word magazine article, I found her journey from grief to peace of mind quite interesting, and, as it turned out, the phenomena were much more intriguing than flickering lights. The key phenomenon was the hand imprint, which occurred on the first, second, and third anniversaries of the death of the author’s husband, but there were other intriguing phenomena and synchronicities.

In her search for answers, the authors interviewed many esteemed researchers, including several who are members of the Academy’s Advisory Council. Overall, this book was a very interesting read.



– Michael Tymn

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Healing Light: An Apprenticeship in Peruvian Shamanism by Oscar Miro-Quesada, 6 audio CDs, 7 hrs, 45 mins, Sounds True, 2015.

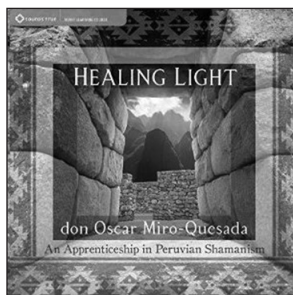
Full disclosure: Having experienced first-hand the magick of the author of these CDs, I'm unable to claim any "objectivity," assuming there is such a thing, which there isn't. That said, I can honestly recommend this work for your enlightenment and inspiration.

The author lays out key elements of the Peruvian tradition, while at the same time putting it in the context of other shamanisms as well as parapsychology and other disciplines. This makes for interesting "cross-correspondences," illustrating that while shamanism may be *wyrd* (mysterious) it is certainly not weird (beyond the pale of ordinary life). The author goes deep into the ancient tradition but is "hip" to the postmodern idiom, while not diluting or transmogrifying that tradition. For example, Carl Jung's "shadow" comes to light, so to speak, in some of the author's reflections like "Darkness is required to see the stars."

Practitioners will recognize "core" shamanic elements, namely those found cross-culturally: the worlds of "ordinary and nonordinary reality," the dismemberment of the old self by the spirits, the vision quest, the importance of ceremony, the power places and animals and objects, the Keepers of the landscape, the notion of "as above so below," the power of crystals, the sacred plant medicine (*coca*), and the energy body (*poqpo*).

Too, shamans across the world today are talking about a "Great Purification" on the near horizon, characterized by global chaos, a "Great Turning" resulting in a totally "New Age." We might be tempted to write off such a "world reversal" or "cosmic transformation" (*pachakuti*), as the author calls it, as simple paranoia, were it not for all the scientists across the world warning us of the same thing.

Listeners will hear "power songs" (my term)—incantations or mantras—used for healing that reminded me of the healing tones of the Chinese Ba Gua tradition. Too, the author takes listeners on extended shamanic journeys ("soul-flights"), a practice emphasized by Mircea Eliade in his classic *Shamanism*. While beginners might be able to take such journeys successfully by themselves in this Era of Mass Distraction, an experienced guide—with music to boot—is welcome for providing focus and concentration, or what parapsychologists call



"absorption," a state of consciousness productive of nonordinary experiences.

Practitioners will also recognize "culturally specific" elements, or at least interesting twists on "core" ones, namely those found exclusively, or nearly so, in the Peruvian tradition. I was especially struck by the contrasting concepts of *hucha* (a person's "dense" or "stuck" energy resulting from living out of harmony with the world) and *ayni* ("light" energy freely flowing between oneself and the world resulting from living in harmony with it). I see the distinction often in my practice, yet have yet to hear it expressed so elegantly. It's a profound formula for health—sacred reciprocity with the earth (*pachamama*) is good for you and me.

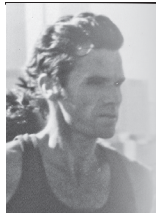
Another rich notion is the sacred altar (*mesa*), a container for the forces of the universe that we can direct to affect our world. As a recovering Catholic, this notion resonated with me much more than the table that a priest stood behind while everybody else watched. The *mesa*, instead, is a focal point for aggregating energy to be sent out into the world for healing. The *mesa* worker sets an intent, but one less specific than in many traditions, instead "letting go and letting God." The energy is released to where it is most needed, not necessarily where we individually, with our narrow perspective, think it is needed—the energy will do the right thing. That way, we won't whine and shake our fists at the gods when our petty little agendas don't work out the way our petty little egos wanted.

Associated with *mesa* work are unique gestures and directions used for various purposes, for example circling one way to contain energy but another way to release it. In doing *mesa* work, the tradition stresses not judging or excluding anybody or anything, instead embracing the whole world with all its warts and worse. This effectively immunizes us from temptation to misuse the energy to harm "the bad."

The CDs come, gratefully, with a glossary of Quechua terms. At times, though, listeners may want more physical-world context and personal stories showing how the tradition might play out in their daily lives. For that, though, they can start with the author's podcast interview with Christina Pratt, author of *Encyclopedia of Shamanism*, at whyshamanismnow.com, and to his own website at heartofthehealer.com.

I do have to disagree with the implication of the work's subtitle, that it serves as an initiation into the Peruvian tradition. Call me old school, but I've found there's no substitute for face-to-face training, preferably where the shamans practice. But as an introduction to the tradition, it's a very good start.

— David Kowalewski, Ph.D.



Practicing Death

To practice death is to practice freedom — Michel de Montaigne

Michael Tymn



How Mary Lincoln Dealt with Grief

Many of President Abraham Lincoln's biographers denigrate Mary Todd Lincoln, his wife, making her out to be an eccentric, deranged shrew, one committed to a lunatic asylum in her later years. Moreover, history has it that Abraham's true love was Ann Rutledge, not Mary.

After recently reading a biography of Mary Lincoln by Professor Jean H. Baker, I have had to rethink my ideas about Mrs. Lincoln. She may have been homely, fastidious, and imprudent to some degree, but Baker makes a good case for her being intelligent, eloquent, affectionate, gregarious, witty, debonair, cultured, frank, sympathetic, devoted to her husband and children, and the "belle of the ball."

Baker's research also suggests that the Ann Rutledge story was mostly a myth created by William Herndon, Lincoln's law partner and early biographer. Apparently, Mary disliked Herndon, said to be an alcoholic, from the beginning and never invited him to dinner. Herndon then got his revenge in a speech given in 1866 by exaggerating Lincoln's relationship with Rutledge and implying that Lincoln never really loved Mary. The story spread like wildfire, embedding itself in the collective memory of the American public and becoming modern day fact.

Many people today know that Mary was judged insane and committed to an asylum, but few people know the full story. According to Baker, Robert Lincoln, the only surviving son of the Lincolns, brought the insanity charges against her, primarily out of concern that his mother would impoverish herself with her undisciplined shopping habits. Indications were that he was also concerned that his mother would be duped into giving away her money to unscrupulous mediums. Whether he was also concerned about his inheritance being depleted is speculative.

Robert arranged for five doctors, none of whom had examined his mother, to testify against her at the trial. He also appointed her defense attorney, who offered no defense.

With the help of friends, especially one Myra Bradwell, who had a law degree but was not allowed to practice law because of her gender, and her husband, Judge James B. Bradwell, both Spiritualists, Mary was released from the asylum after just three months and three weeks of incarceration. After a year-long battle to recover her

assets from Robert, she moved to southern France to live alone for several years, but health problems caused her to return to Springfield, Illinois to live with her sister. She died of a stroke at age 64, shortly after reconciling with Robert.

It is difficult enough to deal with the premature



death of one child, but Mary lost three children, really four considering Robert's actions, and saw her husband murdered. I suspect that many people don't consider how much more difficult it was to grieve the loss of a loved one in those days. Today, a person can attempt to drown out the sorrow by turning on soothing music, escaping into a radio or television program, emailing friends or talking with friends on the phone, and having friends or relatives visit. Mary had none of that. She lived alone in a Chicago hotel room for \$45 a week, including meals – a room that was for the most part dark even during the day. Men might have found an escape by wandering down to the local saloon, but women had no such option. They sat in those unlighted rooms with little more than memories to placate the grieving mind.

My guess is that Mary's only escape came from browsing in shops near her hotel. She likely felt obligated to buy something now and then, even if she had no need for it, to appease shopkeepers. In effect, she was buying peace of mind. According to Baker, indications are that she was still living well within her annual income.

As for the mediums she consulted, most historians suggest she was the victim of many charlatans, but that is based on their assumptions that all mediums are charlatans.

The extent to which Mary was comforted by various mediums will never be known.

Mary Lincoln's story makes one wonder how much of recorded history we can actually accept as factual, how much of it has been distorted by biographers and other authors based on their acceptance of hearsay and rumor, their biases, their faulty research, their misinterpretations of what others have said or written, their choices of verbiage, their skewing of facts, and their needs for sensationalism that will appeal to publishers and readers.



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The Searchlight — February 2016

Book Review Editor Position Open

The Academy is looking for a volunteer to fill the position of book review editor. The book review editor is responsible for making sure that books of possible interest to members are reviewed or otherwise noted in its publications.

Publishers and authors often send notices of new releases to the Academy with offers to send a review copy. The book review editor responds to such notices. If she or he does not want to review the book, it is the responsibility of the book review editor to e-mail the members of the publications committee or other Academy members to solicit a reviewer.

The book review editor might also write a regular one-page feature for *The Searchlight* discussing books of possible interest to Academy members or featuring one particular book. A book review columnist, independent of other responsibilities mentioned above, will be considered.

Members not interested in the book review editor position or that of book review columnist are otherwise encouraged to submit reviews of books which they feel might be of interest to other members. Contact the editor for guidelines.

Interested members should e-mail Michael Tymn at metgat@aol.com and Paul Hauser at pauljhauser@gmail.com

Movie in the Making

STX Entertainment has acquired motion picture rights to *The Witch of Lime Street: Séance, Seduction and Houdini in the Spirit World*, according to David Jaher, author of the book just recently released and drawing rave reviews.

The book is about the mediumship of Mina Crandon, the wife of a Boston, Mass. gynecologist. She was given the pseudonym "Margery" for privacy reasons. Referred to as a "reincarnation of Mary Magdalene," Margery mystified many scholars, scientists, and magicians, including the great Houdini, during the 1920s. In the end, researchers could not agree as to the genuineness of the phenomena produced through her. Some of them, including Houdini, concluded that her phenomena were fraudulent, but others were certain that they were genuine. One debunking theory was that Margery's husband surgically enlarged her "anatomical storehouse" so she could smuggle her "bag of tricks" into the séance room. Those believing in Margery's mediumship claimed that Houdini attempted to frame her by placing a fold-up ruler in a box used to restrain her. Much of the phenomena seemed to be beyond scientific scrutiny.

The disagreement among researchers in the Margery case is often looked upon as bringing about the end of psychical research and the beginning of parapsychology. (*The book will be reviewed in the next issue of this publication.*) — MET